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RUCNMR/MERCOSUR COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SANTIAGO 000538

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR CA/FPP - John Long ; Pass to DHS
POSTS FOR Fraud Prevention Managers

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [KFRD](#) [CVIS](#) [CMGT](#) [CI](#)
SUBJECT: FOREVER SUMMER - SANTIAGO'S J1 SUMMER WORK AND TRAVEL
TRENDS

Ref: 09 SANTIAGO 298

Summary

¶1. Santiago's Fraud Prevention Unit (FPU) conducted a validation study of its FY 2008 and FY 2009 Summer Work Travel (SWT) J1 visa program. The results show a steady increase in issuances, but a slight decrease in overstay rates. While FY08 saw an overstay rate of about 4.4%, FY09 results show an overstay rate of 3%. For the FY08 SWT season (December 2007 - April 2008), Santiago issued 3,536 SWT J1 visas, 15% more than the previous year. For the FY09 SWT season (December 2008 - April 2009), Santiago issued 3,678 SWT J1 visas, an increase of 4% over the previous year. End Summary.

Background

¶2. Chile attracts international tourists to its diverse national parks and adventure destinations from the dry Atacama desert to the Patagonian glaciers. For these reasons, Chile has a vibrant tourism and hospitality industry, with many schools offering degrees in hotel management, culinary arts, and tourism management. Chile also boasts a large ski industry, with dozens of ski resorts operating during the southern hemisphere winter. Many SWT program participants are university students who aspire to a career in the hospitality industry, while the rest major in degrees such as business administration or civil engineering, and want to improve their English and experience living in the American culture for four months during the Chilean summer vacation (December through April). Post has seen a steady increase in J1 SWT applicants since 2003.

Methodology

¶3. The FPU generated a list of all J1 visas issued from November 1 through December 31 for each of the program years, a total of 3,536 J1-SWT visas issued during the FY07 period and 3,678 for the same period in FY08. We eliminated J1 visa applicants from this period whose visa annotations showed that they were not participating in the SWT program. For future studies, FPU has requested that SWT program agencies include the searchable keyword "SWT" on the DS-156 to reduce uncertainty in classification and the time taken to identify SWT cases. The FPU used the random number generator in Microsoft Excel to select 800 program participants from each year.

Results

¶4. FPU sent these lists to CA/FPP for batch checks on DHS's Arrival and Departure Information System (ADIS) and the Automated Targeting System (ATS). Of the random sample of 800 for each year, ADIS confirmed a 4.4% overstay rate for the FY08 program and a 3% overstay rate for the FY09 program. The locally employed FPU investigator took the additional step of contacting most the remaining applicants by telephone or email. Some cases were inconclusive, as the applicants were unreachable. FPU found that although ADIS and ATS did not report the return for some applicants,

there were applicants who had returned within the designated time. In several other instances, applicants changed status to work full time or study in the U.S., while others changed to B2 status or married U.S. residents and did not return.

Commentary

¶5. Because of concerns that J1-SWT travel applicants might be economic migrants to the US, Santiago's alert NIV officers have been ensuring that questionable applicants are denied visas. A widespread fraud-ring was discovered in the recently-ended FY09 program, where applicants were providing fake or altered school certificates to qualify for the program as current students. See Reftel. Though more applicants applied this year than ever before, consular officers' vigilance for fraudulent documents and unqualified applicants led to a decrease in overstay rates. However, an overstay rate of 4.4% and 3% means that approximately 110-160 J1-SWT travelers each year overstay their visas. Post will take this information into account as the NIV officers prepare to meet the expected increase in demand for the upcoming FY10 J1-SWT season.

SIMONS